

16. SIGHTING OF THE WHITECAPPED BUNTING *EMBERIZA STEWARTI* (BLYTH) IN HINGOLGADH, GUJARAT

Recently, on a trip to Hingolghadh, a picturesque Fort Palace surrounded by scrub forest not far from Jasdán, we saw a solitary bunting feeding on a rocky slope and finally recognised the bird to be male Whitecapped Bunting, *Emberiza stewarti* (Blyth). But we found that it looked unlike that illustrated in the PICTORIAL GUIDE by Ali (1983). It had a white crown and the rest of the plumage looked quite dull, though the chestnut breast was quite conspicuous. Ali and Ripley (1982) in the HANDBOOK (compact volume) describe the white crown as a state where the grey feathers have abraded and that it occurs about the

time of the spring migration. The present sighting was made on 14 February, 1986, so we presume that this bird was passing through on its return migration north.

To date, this species has been recorded only once before in Gujarat when it was seen in September, 1962 in the same area by Shivraj-kumar (*J. Bombay nat. Hist. Soc.* 59: 956). The bird is a short-distance migrant, breeding in north Pakistan and the Himalayan foothills, and wintering in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and northeastern Maharashtra, according to the HANDBOOK.

P.S.: One male and two female birds were sighted again on 6 December, 1986. One female was also found dead, the specimen which has been presented to the BNHS collection.

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April 29, 1986.

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17. BIRD CASUALTIES IN ROAD ACCIDENTS

I made a survey of the birds killed in road accidents for one complete year from May, 1980 to April, 1981 on National High Way 11 in Bharatpur district of Rajasthan for a length of 5 kms from Km stone 88 to 93.

The selected length of the road is a double way traffic route having an average width of 675 cms. On an average 11 vehicles per hour pass and were counted at Km stone 92 in May, 1980.

Almost every inch of the surrounding land is under cultivation of various crops. Many old trees of Tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*)

TABLE I
CASUALTIES FROM DIFFERENT GROUPS

Group	No. of Casualties in one year	Special note
Amphibia	42	Only adults were recorded.
Reptilia	82	—
Birds	219	—
Mammals	96	Including domestic cattle but excluding human beings.
Total	439	

TABLE 2
BIRD CASUALTIES IN ROAD ACCIDENTS FROM MAY 1980—APRIL 1981

MONTH	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>	<i>Pseudibis papillosa</i>	<i>Accipiter badius</i>	<i>Gyps bengalensis</i>	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>	<i>Francolinus pondicerianus</i>	<i>Pavo cristatus</i>	<i>Grus antigone</i>	<i>Columba livia</i>	<i>Sirepiopelia decaocto</i>	<i>Psitacula krameri</i>	<i>Centropus sinensis</i>	<i>Athene brama</i>	<i>Merops orientalis</i>	<i>Coracias benghalensis</i>	<i>Upupa epops</i>	<i>Picoides maharattensis</i>	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>	<i>Acridotheres tristis</i>	<i>Corvus splendens</i>	<i>Pycnonotus cafer</i>	<i>Turdoides striatus</i>	<i>Orthotomus sutorius</i>	<i>Saxicola caprata</i>	<i>Saxicoloides fulicata</i>	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	Total
May 1980					1							1															2
June 1980				1						1												1					3
July 1980				1		2									1		1										6
Aug 1980				1		1			4	4	1				1			4	4			1					17
Sep 1980	3			4		1			9	3				1	1	3	1	1	3	12				1	1	44	
Oct 1980	2	4		3		1	1	1	1	10	6			1				6	7					2	1	46	
Nov 1980				2	1	4			4	4	1							3							1	20	
Dec 1980					1	2			10										1			1			2	17	
Jan 1981			1			1			8	1												1		1		13	
Feb 1981				3	1	1			8	1	1			1					1	1		1			3	22	
Mar 1981				2		2			6										2						1	4	17
Apr 1981				2	1				6					1									1		1	12	
Total	5	4	1	19	4	2	15	1	1	66	16	3	1	3	3	3	2	1	19	25	1	4	1	1	5	13	219

are present on either side of the road. Younger trees of many species like *Eucalyptus* spp., *Acacia nilotica*, *Pongamia glabra*, *Dalbergia sissoo*, *Delonix regia* etc. which were planted by the Forest Department from 1977 to 1980 are also seen. The famous Keoladeo National Park, Bharatpur is hardly 35 km. away from this area.

During the study period a total of 439 casualties were recorded from different groups as shown in Table 1.

It is clear from Table 1 that the maximum casualties were among birds. The species-wise detail of the bird casualties is as follows (Table 2).

Peculiarities of the bird accidents:

1. Birds are the most susceptible for road accidents among vertebrates.
2. Birds remain active throughout the year hence they occur throughout the year in road accidents.
3. Aquatic birds keep away from roads

and remain most of the time near or inside water bodies. Due to their restricted activities in vicinity of water bodies, a minimum number among them become victims of road accidents.

4. Nocturnal birds killed in road accidents were much less in comparison to diurnal birds.
5. *Streptopelia decaocto* has the highest number of casualties.

6. A very few *Gyps bengalensis* were nesting on old Tamarind trees present on either side of the road, and their mortality rate was high. Actually most of them were killed by moving vehicles while they were scavenging on dead bodies of other animals killed in road accidents.

7. A fair number of crows were also killed. Actually 90% casualties were among younger birds, born in that year, which were quite unfamiliar to roads due to lack of experience.

8. The maximum number of birds were killed during the rainy season, from July to October.

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18. DEFENSIVE BEHAVIOUR IN THE INDIAN ROOFED TURTLE
KACHUGA TECTA (GRAY)

(With a text-figure)

Static defensive adaptations — head, tail and appendage retraction into a shell, is seen in all emydid turtles. Box turtles of several genera from both the Old and New Worlds, in addition possess single or double hinges in the plastron, allowing them to cover, partially or completely, their retracted parts.

When alarmed, the Indian roofed turtle

Kachuga tecta retracts its head, tail and appendages readily into its shell. However, in the absence of hinges in the plastron, the species is vulnerable to some degree of predation, especially from land-based predators, even after pulling in the projecting body parts into the shell. In this position, physical threat such as a light touch to the turtle's head or fore-